

Lessons Learned Record of Interview

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Introduction

SIGAR gave a brief introduction regarding the background of the Lessons Learned program and its effort to contextualize Afghanistan. To recap, the team covered the creation of the Lessons Learned program and the objective of it to broaden SIGAR analysis beyond audits and investigations. Along with the shift to RSM, we want to shift to telling comprehensive stories and becoming a repository

State did not like the idea of an Army chief of staff so NSC took control of the group. The senior director at the time was (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) and (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) can talk more about the earlier years. (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) into the NSC and at the time the 14th St side of the building was condemned and undergoing reconstruction so (b)(3)

[REDACTED] had a coffee table we could use. Eventually we cleared a room and split up between defense and reconstruction/stabilization. At this time the idea was in establishing strategies for South Asia. Ambassador Khalilzad was still there [in Afghanistan] at the time and had a lot of connections with the Kurds and several other groups.

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(b)(5)



The execution of policy in Afghanistan [during these early years] was well-supported by a close connection between the general and Amb. Khalilzad. They worked well together. On the Defense side, (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) wanted to have a mutual fund and (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) They wanted to make the commander know that he can build a school and build a judiciary. (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) wanted to mandate it so that they will actually do it.

Metrics

One of Rice's priorities was metrics; she also wanted to establish reconstruction and budget schedules. At first the metrics were contentious and we should have pushed it more so that Lute would have pushed it more. This idea matured with Neumann and then died down a bit again. Then in 2008 it turned up again.

We were counting the number of schools built not the number of school opened or operating. There was resistance from DOD. The last thing you want to do is also start going after DOD on security progress. Look at the U.N. report...we didn't want to do that. The Army can measure the number of people trained but not the number of people in the army or retention rates. Governance is also hard to measure. You tie observables to varying plans. It would be like measuring police progress to police training plans.

We briefed this [document on metrics] to everyone but the deputies and there was a clear sense of urgency that we needed to implement it. Hadley pushed this document and our plan to implement in 2007 to all the important offices. At this point security incidents doubled and we had not been able to build schools, which was because, as cables have shown us, that we simply contracted the wrong people. A similar example is if you are trying to do construction work in Pueblo, Colorado. If you don't contract locally, you will not get be able to do anything. Absent a level of measurement below [#of schools built], it is hard to measure progress. The schools that were built there were different form their design and walls were falling down. If USAID people were able to get out and take people with construction backgrounds with them, there might have been a difference.

Violence in the south, where we had a PRT and where the Canadians had a presence in 2006 was difficult to measure. The Canadians simply sat in their tanks because they ran into such ferocious fighting, worse than they saw in WWII. We never executed a southern strategy and our numbers were limited to about 200. There was an Australian guy there also and he said that the violence started to affect people and in turn affected violence. It is hard to measure violence absent a larger

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framework for understanding the issue. Mobility however is a great metric. If people can get out it says something about violence.

Personnel Quality and Territory Issues

The number of personnel in country was limited by the size of the facility. When Khalilzad was there he doubled the size of the facility. The other thing we need to understand is incentives. It is like how originally there was no security apparatus supporting Karzai, but then we started building the team, along with support from the Secret Service, but there was no incentive because people were basically working themselves out of a job. This is what we witnessed [people not wanting to work themselves out of jobs] and in the long term we need people to invest in the culture and the identity of a country instead of just killing people.

Up until 2007 we took the time to get agencies to look at the U.K. files and look at the [human terrain] maps. For example in Bosnia, we knew who lived in each village and what connections they had. We knew the tribal friction and it changed over time. (b)(1) - (1.4)(d), (b)(3) (b)(3) the [U.S.] Army was trying to get anthropologists in to Afghanistan for their Human Terrain Teams (HTTs). This was a smart step. There was a mechanical information transfer to other people, to the commander, and to people outside.

Early on, DOD wanted to shift custody of detainees from DOD to GIRoA, and basically told GIRoA two things: 1) you will keep them until they died; and 2) you will pay for it. The Italians part of this was to provide the prisons and the DOD wanted to get out of this arena, but other countries were not signing up. At this time, Dr. [Jack Dyer] Crouch was the Deputy National Security Advisor. It took a while for DOD to say that it would put money into building the prison [pul-e-charki prison]. Now, I took courses in field artillery tactics and one of the main lessons is that you either can either give away a capability or keep it, but not both. If you give up custody of the prisoners, you can't keep control. You can't have it both ways. People were afraid by giving something [like control over detainees] away because of a fear they might do harm later – recidivism among high and low level Taliban.

We decided early on to get rid of the low level bad guys. If we give them away, according to Douglas Feith, Afghanistan has them and that is all wrong. Crouch, nonetheless gave this mission to some new brigadier. Feith created some slides to make his point, but at the briefing he never distributed them and the briefing went nowhere. The fundamental issue was that you lose control if you gave something [like detainee custody] away and there was a lot of reluctance. Eventually DOD did build the prison and transferred custody to the Afghans. Block D came in 2007/2008 and housed people in Afghanistan that DOD was experiencing problems with transferring out of the country because of their profiles. Their profiles that needed to be reviewed for a transfer were problematic because of both bureaucratic issues or their profiles were simply classified and were unable to be transferred or reviewed. Again this speaks to not wanting to lose control. I am not positive but these transfer difficulties were likely because of the profiles were simply classified and the profiles could have been re-written in an unclassified form, but weren't.

PRTs in Nangarhar

There was a USAID person in Nangarhar and one of the objectives was to expand PRT influence by building more roads. So they built more roads to places the PRT considered important and where they wanted more influence. This effort was well-coordinated.

Now the personnel coming in after them went for training at Hohenfels Training Area in Germany. On the PRT side, there then was move to consolidate the smaller PRTs into larger ones. They

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thought it would be safer and cost less. In the end, having these PRTs on larger bases decreased their efficiency.

Another aspect of this same lesson can be seen in Haiti. When the disaster happened in Haiti, the Chinese sent a bottle of water and a band aid, they got the headlines. This was their idea of helping. We did an assessment and brought in a massive amount of resources but as organization's view funding issues, there was a disconnect between funding levels and effectiveness.

Budgeting and an Agriculture Experiment

President Bush's new agriculture guy took office and decided to send some farming experts to Afghanistan and the Deputy Secretary of Agriculture was fond of it too. The program took real farmers from the U.S., paired them with [U.S.] government and Afghans to teach a real skill. This skill was lost however once USAID started to contract out this effort. Agriculture paid for this with their money and their spaces even though this was not part of their core mission. I had to explain the importance of this mission to keep it and eventually the secretary got funding for this mission within their budget. This was the first time a domestic agency budget POM'd money for a program taking place in another country.

The State Department also finally started budgeting and it went okay. It ended up growing in size and they eventually learned how to budget more effectively because of insistence from Congress. DOD never had to do this because they were outside of this budget issue and used supplements.

One key to budgeting is actually moving money and funding in regular order. Another aspect is creating mechanisms for country teams to use money and funding across different accounts as needed. DOD did put in a money coordinator to inform people of the funds, move the funds, and increase transparency. The idea that embassy could know where the money came from would have given the team knowledge and that knowledge would have been power.

Advocating for Resources

Advocating for resources was very difficult. Alonso Fulgham was there at this time [as USAID Mission Director]. There was always a fight over the budget and people saying that we don't need reconstruction funding. We lost a year of progress over a long fight for reconstruction funds. This focus on reconstruction only started in 2005 or 2006 and then there was a dip in funding until Neumann.

The funding mechanisms we have are not dynamic. The president made a speech to announce a new Afghanistan strategy in January 2006 or 2007. This was after a review done by the NSC and which John Gastright was key to. The recommendations in the review were to increase the number of troops and increase funding for governance programs. So the president made his speech and it mentions a troop increase but then there was a new Iraq strategy announced and both advocated a troop surge. DOD was told to prioritize Iraq with troops.

[Following this new Iraq strategy] we had a meeting at the presidential level with all the principals to review Afghanistan and troop level details. We discussed increasing and decreasing numbers as well as moving brigades. The purpose of the meeting was to air out the issue to the president. After the meeting the president then went to the Pentagon and made a decision on troop levels. The president made a decision for decisions sake, not to actually manage troop levels. There was no plan like we had with the strategy for the south and southwest.

Another piece to this story is that we got helicopters from DOD for the MOI. DOD came up with the idea to build one central helicopter maintenance facility because it was more efficient and less expensive. The NSC fought this because if it [the helicopter fleet/maintenance capability] was with one single entity, this entity would only support their organization (and not assist with drug

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interdictions or CT mission). We wanted what was best for all of the organizations, but also had to leave them to their own devices.

Power and Roads

If there was a dam in the south producing power the reason is because of Neumann and his push to invest in power. In Kabul we put generators because it was fast and the lights were a signal of government power – talk of efficient and sustainable. We also wanted to make the Afghans pay for the generators and the fuel. There was also the idea that India would support power line extensions and creation. Neumann dedicated a lot of his energy on this.

The Ring Road was good because it encouraged countries to work together, including the Japanese (who were really worried about their people getting killed). Neumann helped to bring nations together to fill the gap. It was really a systems-of-systems problem and it was solved through politics and diplomacy with other nations. In some cases a lack of cooperation could be used against nations at home for not supporting the effort.

NATO Coordination

I was pushing to get ISAF out of Kabul and expanded to other regions. Many countries helped push this idea. The French were ferocious and always wanted to get out and do CT mission but Rumsfeld was not interested in letting this happen. The Dutch were in Khandahar, where we also had some SF teams. This created some tension between the coalition and the nation states. The tension was between what forces could do. Really tasks were condition by what countries were willing to do. The Dutch were attacked very few times and the responses [to attacks] were well coordinated by the various countries. The U.A.E. asked to play a bigger role but at the same time didn't want to draw attention. Some [Afghans or Americans?] were concerned about the optics of "Arabs securing our country" and other political constraints. In Canada, when one soldier dies the whole country is in mourning so they pulled out to re-tool.

We did have to think about what to do with a country that is not doing a good job, like the Italians with the Justice sector. Do we take it over? During one visit from Maureen Quinn, one lady kept bringing up the justice issue but Maureen kept saying it has been decided.

I was brought one night by the U.N. to Neumann's place and he was in his pajamas. We had dinner and then the U.N. wanted to know what the position of the Russians was. They wanted to know how a change of allegiances would affect the Russians support. Was active non-contention possible? We were looking to understand the future of security in order to continue the reconstruction effort.

International Organizations and the Security Environment

We saw MSF leave because several of their staff were killed in the west likely because of tribal politics. At this time MSF's paradigm for operating did not apply in Afghanistan. In Afghanistan they were targeted for doing good, whereas in other countries they were not harmed for doing good. MSF left because they realized that their way of helping was just not possible in that security environment.

Many aid organizations in the U.S. and internationally don't want to be affiliated with the military to get access. This affiliation matters and there are some questions to ask, including:

- Do we need to become active partners with the military?
- Is it efficient to have State contract out their security people?
- What is the long terms way to deal with the security issue?
- How do we posture our presence against the need to get out and our role with the host government?

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Reachback Program

At first we sent in CT and later PRTs. The PRTs gained recognition because SecDef started to invest in it. DOD wanted to control them and sometimes others would outfeckless them, sometimes not, it depends on how others can culturally join the mission. The Reachback group was mainly Rumsfeld and [Secretary of the Army] Martin [Hoffman] (who started a backchannel for reporting). There was a lot of dysfunction and infighting that could have been handled better.

The Reachback program sent chief executives to Afghanistan in 2003 to help GIRoA. This group included top executives from General Motors and Continental Airlines and they worked out of the embassy. In the case of the executive from Continental Airlines, this person went over and advised the Afghan national airline. One benefit with this program was that these people brought lots of outside-government contacts with them. The program aimed to bring in outside expertise that the government didn't have.

At one point we did an interagency thing, which DOD participated in, [regarding Reachback]. DOD ended up creating their own independent plan and wanted it to be the main plan. They went to Dr. Rice and she said no to this plan. Feith felt stymied and this created more tension.

2006 Reset

(b)(5)



We can't have coherent national policy in different offices because the president still needed an office to create this integration. The organizational changes that Hadley proposed with taking DOD functions from them had to wait until Feith left due to the optics.

The reorganization was good. We needed an interagency process [the AIOG] to know how to apply instruments of power in a coherent way. We put together structurally different ideas like Iraq and Afghanistan under the same office, which I think was good. It was good because they were competing for resources and it made it more useful for presidential decision making.

There were tough calls for O'Sullivan on Iraq. She came from the Iraq office and knew Iraq, but not really Afghanistan. This was okay because at the time Iraq was the priority. The Lute structure was not much different although the structure was modified over time (but not until the end of the Bush administration).

Continuity of the NSC

Hadley said this was the first time an administration didn't expect not to be here – our presence was usually terminal with the presidency. There was a huge effort and a push by Hadley, to put together all the papers from all the departments to create a continuity effort. The papers were vetted and the President even he helped with "lines in and lines out" editing. Hadley took a personal interest in this effort because while there was a different party coming into the office, there were several things that stayed fundamentally the same including the threats facing the U.S. and our national security interests. In some cases they passed files directly to the transition team (with the

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Records Act people present). In some cases, people had to retain their files and shift them over after-the-fact.

Lessons

1. Budget and plan for the long term even if expecting a short war.
2. Develop interagency teams on the ground (with the country team) and empower the leaders to be able to use resources effectively.
3. Avoid limiting people's options; issue intent guidance, not specific instructions. This would include high level guidance for developing and deploying forces and include State participation in Phase 0.
4. Build teams around what you are trying to do like we did with the AIOG. It was a single issue community and a body for communication.